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4 March 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
ATTENTION : Mr. Enno Knoche
SUBJECT : Preliminary Evaluation of Situation
Summary on Developments in North Viet-
nam and the Lao Corridor during the
Period 22 February to 1 March 1963.

1. The information contained in this summary disclosed very little activity both in Southern Laos and the contiguous areas of North Vietnam. In view of what we know must be taking place in this area, this summary serves to substantiate the difficulty of security reliable intelligence on the scope of North Vietnamese support for the Viet Cong and the Pathet Lao.

Laos

2. Recent reports [redacted] failed to indicate a significant build-up in either Neutralist or Pathet Lao military capability. [redacted]

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3. An item of unusual interest is the reported reduction in the number of buildings--from 43 to 18--at Tchepone Fort. Tchepone since May 1961 has been the Pathet Lao supply center for activities in southern Laos and for resupply of North Vietnamese cadres infiltrating through Laos to South Vietnam. This apparent dismantlement of certain facilities may reflect reduced Pathet Lao requirements in south Laos following the formation of the coalition government in June 1962. It is likely, however, that Tchepone--accessible by fair weather road from North Vietnam--remains a key way station for Viet Cong cadres en route to South Vietnam. Further analysis of reports on Tchepone Airfield may provide information regarding Communist air resupply of this strategic area of Laos.

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North Vietnam

4. Information on facilities and activities in North Vietnam was more comprehensive, but little of this can be directly linked to military developments in Laos and South Vietnam. Construction is reported at two airfields in North Vietnam, one northwest of Hanoi and one in southern North Vietnam near Vinh. The former field, when completed, could be in excess of 10,000 feet in length. This would provide the capital city with an airbase capable of landing the heavy transport aircraft

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5. Evidence in this report also confirmed the activation of a new airfield at Kep Ha, located some 40 miles northeast of Hanoi.

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6. Four piston engine "fighters" were reported at Cat Bi airfield; further analyses will probably reveal that these are trainers. North Vietnam is not known to have any combat aircraft at this time.

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7. Several ground forces installations are also apparently being enlarged. Major encampments that have shown some expansion over the past six months are located at Son Tay, Vinh, and Dong Hoi. All of these are known locations of large ground force elements.

8. An apparently new installation has been established at Dong Le near the coast above Vinh. It consists of 39 barracks, 75 warehouses, and about 40 support buildings. This may indicate an increase of troop strength along the coastal areas of southern North Vietnam.

9. Activity on both highway and rail systems appears to be normal to below normal. The reported total of 240 units of rolling stock in the Hanoi yards is not unusual. Their train park includes some 1,300 rail cars and most of these regularly transit the Hanoi yards. The addition of 16 petroleum tanks estimated to be 30 feet in diameter in the Hanoi area was the only major civilian construction noted.

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10. An installation sighted just west of Thanh Hoa could represent [redacted] "a previously reported biological warfare research facility." This installation consists of 18 buildings and is enclosed in a secure area. [redacted] no previous information [redacted] biological warfare research facility near Thanh Hoa. The 330 Infantry Division is also located at Thanh Hoa, and this facility may be related to this unit's training activities.

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